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ABSTRACT

Ways in which teachers can use the guidelines set out in "Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century" (Standards) to design classroom instruction are discussed. The Standards document is explained, some misconceptions about it are examined, its relevance for the classroom teacher is explored, and examples are offered of ways the Standards can be implemented both in the overall foreign language curriculum and in daily lesson plans and activities. The organization of the Standards is outlined, and their relation to two New York State documents ("Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English" and the state syllabus, "Modern Languages for Communication") is highlighted. Several examples illustrate how parallel concepts in other disciplines can be used to reinforce language learning content and activities. A sample activity, planning a visit to Paris, illustrates how the Standards can be applied in a larger-scale assignment. Contains 9 references. (MSE)

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Meeting the National Standards: Now What Do I Do?

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Introduction

Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (hereafter referred to in this article as *Standards*) was published in 1996. The Statement of Philosophy from which this document was generated embodies the goals and beliefs of the foreign language (FL) profession:

> Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. (*Standards*, 1996, p. 7).

It is one of the most far-reaching and encompassing documents for our profession, and yet most foreign language (FL) professionals are either unaware of or unclear as to its intent, import, and impact. This article aims to explain the Standards document in general, dispel some misconceptions about it, discuss its relevance for the classroom FL teacher, and give examples of implementation of the Standards in the FL curriculum and, indeed, in daily lesson plans and activities. The relation of the national Standards to other FL documents pertinent to New York State teachers will also be discussed. These documents include *Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English* and the New York State Syllabus, *Modern Languages for Communication*.

What ARE the Standards, anyway?

The *Standards* is a discipline-specific document that is an outgrowth of the long-term national strategy proposed by the President and state governors at their Educational Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1989 and delineated in the booklet, *America 2000: An Educational Strategy* (1991). The strategy was designed to accomplish six national educational goals that have far-reaching consequences for all schools at all levels and for all subject areas. (The entire thrust of this meeting and its resultant document has been since referred to as either "America 2000" or "Goals 2000".) After two presidencies that did *not* include FLs in their national goals, the FL profession has definitely made progress. Foreign language instruction is finally being recognized as a vital part of this national unit of educational strategy and excellence that includes all the core subject areas. Indeed, one of the principal mandates of "Goals 2000" document is "...to improve language instruction at all levels and to facilitate sequential learning" (American Council on Education, p. 4).

In order to realize the goals of this national educational strategy, academic disciplines were expected to delineate national Standards for instruction and learning. In 1993, a collaborative effort of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese resulted in federal funding and, thus, the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project was born. The task-force was made up of eleven FL teachers, representing the gamut of FL professionals from literature instructors to public classroom teachers to second language acquisition researchers. Hundreds of additional FL professionals had a chance to provide input and suggestions throughout the iterations of the drafts of the Standards. (Brown & Phillips, 1997; *Standards*, 1996).

The FL Standards are essentially **content Standards** that define what students should know and be able to do in FL instruction in a K-12 sequence. Granted, most public school systems in the United States do *not* have a K-12 FL instructional sequence at this time, but the Standards provide a way to focus on a common vision to reach, eventually, that very goal. In this sense, the Standards document is a political one, delineating the goals of the profession and making a case for institutional and instructional change vis-à-vis the way FL programs are conceived

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on the local, regional, and national levels. It also serves as means for public relations between FL professionals and administrators, parents, and students by stating content goals at distinct intervals (grades 4, 8, and 12) for all FL learners.

The Standards are *not*, however, a curriculum guide. They are not meant to be used to dictate local curriculum or even assessment. Indeed, evaluation and assessment is to be defined locally: at district, school, and even individual course levels. The assessment becomes, then, the cadre of **performance Standards** by which students are evaluated. Neither are the Standards tied to any particular instructional method. To do so would be to limit their applicability, flexibility, and universality. The Standards are a statement of what FL education should prepare students to do. Given certain overriding goals of FL education, the Standards articulate the essential skills and knowledge language learners need in order to achieve said goals.

Organization of the Standards

A brief discussion of the organization of the Standards and the resultant document will clarify many questions FL teachers might have about their implementation. The Standards are organized around five main goals: **communication, cultures, connections, comparisons,** and **communities**. Eleven standards in total, distributed among these goal categories, are the content Standards that ostensibly will give FL students "the powerful key to successful communication: *knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom*" (*Standards*, 1996, p. 11). In addition, interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes are the framework that defines the communication goal. A complete listing of the Standards can be found in Appendix A. Each Standard is accompanied by Sample Progress Indicators for grades 4, 8, and 12. These indicators reflect student progress in meeting a particular standard but are not, in and of themselves, Standards. The premises of the indicators are that they can be realistically achieved at some level of performance by all students; they can be arrived at through a myriad of instructional modes; and they are measurable or assessable in a variety of ways. The indicators are meant to be interpreted by FL teachers and curriculum developers who will transform them into classroom lessons and activities. The Sample Progress Indicators can also be used to assist in establishing aceptable performance levels for FL learners at the local level.

A final feature of the Standards document is an extensive listing of FL lessons that target specific content Standards. These examples are called Learning Scenarios, and they are included for a number of purposes. First, they obviously provide examples of how classroom practice relates to the Standards. Second, they are meant to allow for divergent thinking and to stimulate creativity in lesson and curriculum design. Third, they are both learner-centered and Standards-driven. Lastly, they clearly illustrate the interrelationship of the Standards and their goals. In the present document, many different languages are represented in the scenarios. In the future, companion documents to the national Standards are planned with language-specific examples and themes.

Relation to the NYS Syllabus and the LOTE Document

Two documents that FL teachers in the state of New York should be familiar with are the *Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English* (LOTE) and *Modern Languages for Communication*, the New York state syllabus (NYSS) for FL instruction. While the LOTE document was published after the *Standards*, the NYSS is a product of the previous decade. Nevertheless, both these documents can easily be aligned to the *Standards*, and their compatibility is readily apparent in the common goals set forth by all three instructional resources. The content Standards for the LOTE document are twofold:

Standard 1: Communication Skills

Students will be able to use a language other than English for communication.

Standard 2: Cultural Understanding

Students will develop cross-cultural skills and understandings. Each standard is illustrated in reference to the following subcategories: Modern Languages, Latin, American Sign Language, and Native American Languages. Each subcategory subsumes one or two *key ideas* that address some or, where appropriate, all of the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each key idea is then underscored by *performance indicators* that, in turn, are illustrated by sample tasks. In addition, examples of student work, along with teachers' comments on the work, are included as "suggestions of ways that students can demonstrate progress toward achieving the Standards" (LOTE, 1996, p. v). This model of:

$$\text{Standard} \rightarrow \frac{\text{language}}{\text{subcategory}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{key}}{\text{idea}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{performance}}{\text{indicator}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{sample}}{\text{task}}$$

is followed throughout the Learning Outcomes Checkpoints A, B, and C. Not all of the samples represent exemplary work; indeed, the level of achievement varies considerably. Nevertheless, they serve as models for student activities and teacher expectations for given checkpoints, student production, and language skills. The LOTE publication is truly a document in revision as student work samples will continue to be collected and published.

Clearly, the LOTE document is meant to parallel the national Standards, while reducing the Standards themselves to two generalized categories: communication and culture. The inclusion of a standard for cultural knowledge ensures the complementary nature of the LOTE provisions to the national Standards and acknowledges the absolute necessity of approaching any curricular work in FL from a multicultural perspective. Although the lexicon is a bit different, the overarching goal of language as the primary means of communication among peoples of the world remains the same throughout all three documents.

Listing performance Standards at this level is appropriate as the state of New York has a common agenda for FL curricula statewide: the New York state syllabus. *Performance indicators* from the LOTE are aligned with *proficiencies* from the NYSS; and *sample tasks* from the LOTE are analagous to *situations* from the syllabus. The *topics* and *functions* of the NYSS dovetail nicely with the *content Standards* of the national document. The focus is, again, on using the language appropriately in real life with real people.

What does this mean for me?

Despite all the attention that the move towards subject area Standards in American education has been receiving in the media due to a certain level of politicization surrounding them, what matters most to the individual teacher is what the Standards may change in the classroom. As they are written, the Standards can help the teacher communicate with students, parents, and administrators about what is happening in the classroom and why. The inclusion of FLs in the Goals 2000 mandate helps the teacher demonstrate that FLs are a core subject for all students, not to be considered peripheral in the curriculum. Concomitantly, the clear differentiation of national content Standards from state and local curriculum frameworks and performance Standards, the flexibility built into the Standards document itself, and the voluntary nature of Standards implementation can help allay any fear of losing community control of the education process (*Standards*, 1996, 24-25). Although the Standards represent expectations of progress that all students will make towards achieving performance goals, the possible levels of proficiency attainable for each goal will still represent a broad range allowing students to excel beyond any minimal expectations. In day to day teaching, the Standards are particularly useful in curriculum design, lesson planning, and assessment.

Curriculum design:

The primary message conveyed by the five C's -- communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities -- is that each of these goal areas is important and has a place in the FL curriculum. Thanks to our profession's long-standing focus on the role of communication and context in language learning and the recognition of the functional and sociolinguistic aspects of language, the goals of the Standards are not new to most teachers. The national Standards are not a curriculum, but their specific organization can help us analyze our curriculum by looking closely at what we are now doing to see to what extent we are already implementing the Standards in our classes. Many efforts in this area have been undertaken by teachers around the country, e.g., Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kentucky, and reported at national and regional FL meetings (Clementi & Sandrock, 1997; Conaway et. al., 1997; Welch, 1997). An efficient and common approach involves beginning with a listing of all activities now used in achieving the current curricular goals and using a table to check off those Standards that are addressed by these (see Appendix B). The result of analysis provides a clear graphical display of the Standards that are being met and the areas that may be under-represented in the curriculum and leads to the development of a better balance in the future. This is not to say that all of the goals are equal or that all of the Standards should receive equal weight. Those decisions are up to the teacher, but a better awareness of how much attention is focused on each goal should help in making those decisions.

Lesson plans:

In the previous section we looked at curriculum with a view to meeting the Standards; we can also look at the Standards as an aid in preparing lesson plans. With curricular goals and specific progress indicators in mind, instructional and assessment strategies may be designed to do more to meet the Standards criteria in weaker areas of the curriculum. The relationship between these aspects of curriculum planning is well illustrated in the Nebraska K-12 Foreign Language Frameworks (Appendix C). Although examples of activities aligned with the Standards are available in the Learning Scenarios published with the Standards, the sharing of such materials is an area where teachers can most help each other adapt to these criteria. The "Samples of Student Work" from the NY State "Learning Standards for LOTE" serve much the same purpose, but because they are specifically related to the NYS Syllabus, they can also illustrate NY's performance Standards. Many groups are working on sharing learning scenarios, e.g. Nebraska's Frameworks document, individual AAT's, but the more we can help each other in this area, the better our chances will be to arrive at a broad implementation of Standards-based curricula.

The following example is suggested as an illustration of weaving interdisciplinary lessons, the use of technology, and community resources together to create an exciting and comprehensive project that addresses all of the national Standards. The **Aconcagua Project** calls for students to "climb" this famous peak in South America. The project originates in the language class (here, obviously, Spanish) but spills over into several other disciplines with careful planning and collaboration on the part of the instructors involved. In order to complete this assignment, the students need to plan the entire expedition from start to finish in order to ensure its success. They will work in groups and individually, sharing their information at designated intervals (Standard 1.1; Standard 1.3). They will collect data from a variety of sources, both traditional and technology-based (Standard 1.2). The Aconcagua Official Home Page (http://www.aconcagua.com.ar/aconca.html) will be very helpful for securing much information on the Internet.

Planning the trip will entail everything from getting to the country (airfares, routes) and means and lodging before the climb, to the entrance fee to the park and mountain, conditions for the climb (both geophysical and physi-

ological), costs incurred by the expedition on-site, selection of the optimal ascent route, and so forth. While much of the discussion and planning will take place in the language class, much of the data collection and planning can be reinforced by studying parallel concepts in other disciplines (Standards 3.1; 3.2). Below are some examples of activities that can be implemented in other subject area classes.

Science class (Standard 3.1): students study atmospheric conditions as one ascends the mountain (humidity, winds, temperatures, atmospheric pressure, etc.); this information will also be helpful in planning what type of apparel to take on the trip.

Geography class (Standards 3.1, 3.2): students will need a wide variety of information including maps, latitude and longitude points, geographical location of the country and the peak, etc.

Math class (Standard 3.1): many mathematical concepts and functions can be reinforced while gathering necessary information for the expedition: temperatures, heights, pressures, metric system; reading graphs on statistics for climbing (age, sex, etc.).

Spanish language class (Standards 1.1; 1.2; 2.1; 2.2; 1.3; 4.1; 4.2): vocabulary on weather, numbers, food, nutrition, climbing equipment; planning the final ascent will entail making comparisons of routes to ascend and descend (here students can debate, compare and contrast, making decisions based on best information presented).

Home Economics class (Standards 3.1; 3.2): students research nutrition information to determine their food needs for such a strenuous expedition.

Physical Education and Health class (Standards 3.1; 3.2): proper physical conditioning for such an expedition is absolutely vital; the instructor could describe the relationship between various exercises and physical activities and indicate how such strengthening will benefit the climbers during the ascent.

The Spanish teacher might even bring in a mountain climber to talk about the technical aspects of such an expedition and climb. The teacher could also engage some students who have done this already on a minor scale, etc. (5.1, 5.2). If you know someone who has climbed Aconcagua, so much the better! A case in point: a former student of mine from Spanish V and VI climbed Aconcagua in the late 1980's. For this project, I would call her -- or e-mail her, in this day and age! -- and invite her to come and speak (en español, por supuesto) to the class or, at the very least, tape a phone conversation with her talking about her experience on Aconcagua and throughout the expedition.

The following activity, a Paris WWW museum visit, is offered as an example of a scenario including rubrics:

Paris WWW Visit

Students will work in groups of two to prepare one part of a class trip to Paris. Given very specific instructions about the dates, the number and ages of people going, and special needs of a visually impaired student, they will use the WWW and the library to search for information about the Louvre and the Pompidou museums in Paris. They will collect information about the art that they might see, the preferences of their classmates, weather, travel times to the museums from their hotel, prices for entrance and for meals. They use e-mail to contact one museum to obtain additional information. Then they will plan the day, handing in a written report and also reporting orally to the class.

1. Surfer le WWW pour trouver des informations afin de préparer les deux visites (métro, musées, météo, restaurants).
2. Préparer puis envoyer un EMAIL à un des musées pour leur demander d'envoyer une brochure (outline, first draft, final copy).
3. Chercher des informations supplémentaires à la bibliothèque (bibliographie).
4. Ecrire un rapport d'une page dans lequel tu présentes ton projet pour la journée et ton raisonnement (outline, first draft, final copy).
5. Présenter ta proposition à la classe (5 minutes). Apporter un support visuel (cartes, posters, images).

Standards

1.1 Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions (interaction within pair and interviews of classmates).

1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics (information collection on the Web and in the library).

1.3 Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics (oral/written report).

2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied (museum hours, facilities for handicapped patrons, appropriate language in letter).

3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language (art history).

3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures (museum materials).

5.1 Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting (letter to museum).

This scenario exemplifies the use of technology to engage students in true to life behavior using resources that are available to native speakers. Although a discussion of

assessment strategies is beyond the scope of this paper, sample rubrics for this activity are included in Appendix D.

Activities such as the Aconcagua project and the Paris WWW visit will tend to cut across a wide range of goals, but individual learning scenarios do not need to and indeed often will not reflect so many Standards.

Conclusion

Clearly, the Standards have much to say to us as a profession. They were drafted as a guide to inform classroom instruction. They are also a yardstick by which to measure classroom practice and performance. The Standards were generated from the basic premise that language and culture are the foundations of communication in the world of today and of the 21st century. They are an in-house product in the sense that hundreds of FL teachers were involved in developing and testing them to ensure that the *Standards* is a workable and practical document that will meet the needs of the classroom teacher. As we move forward as a profession, the Standards can be the unifying thread that connects our curricula, our teaching, and our students' learning. By aligning our instruction with the Standards and by sharing our ideas, activities, and learning scenarios with other colleagues, we will strengthen the position of FLs in the national educational agenda, and we will empower our language students to be lifelong language learners and users.

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Appendix A

Standards for Foreign Language Learning

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

CULTURES

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

CONNECTIONS

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

COMPARISONS

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

COMMUNITIES

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

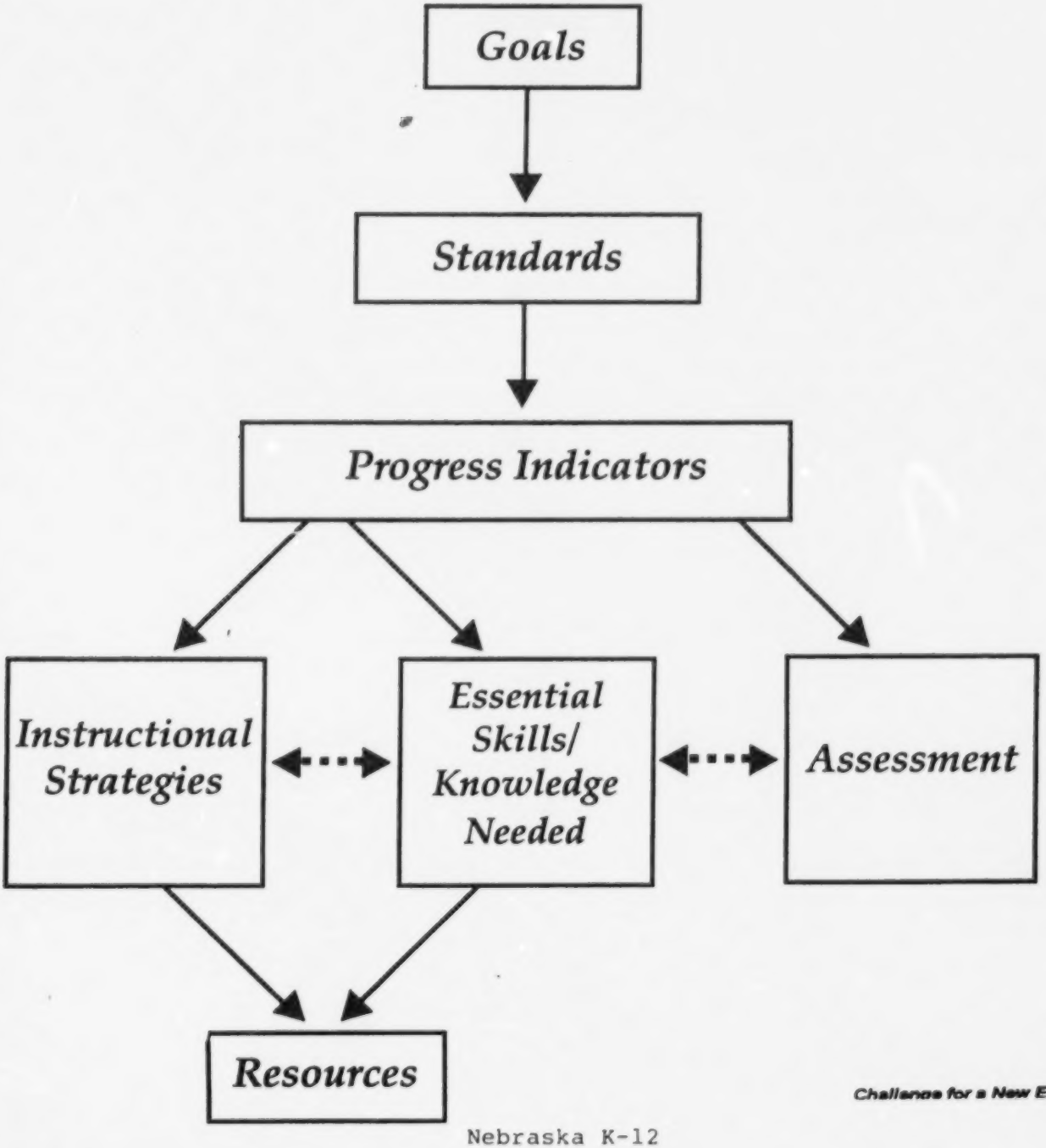
Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century

Appendix C

Illustration 2

The Relationship of Curriculum Planning Elements



Challenge for a New Era

Nebraska K-12

Response #2

Overlay the Standards when appropriate and/or convenient

Goals/ Standards / Units/ Chapters	Communication 1.1 1.2 1.3	Cultures 2.1 2.2	Connections 3.1 3.2	Comparisons 4.1 4.2	Communities 5.1 5.2
Unit 1					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
Unit 2					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
Unit 3					
11					
12					

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Appendix D

Paris WWW visit Rubrics (100 pts)

Inspired by Wade Peterson, Hampton-Dumont HS, Hampton, Iowa

	EXELLENT	GOOD	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	POOR
Class Time Management:	Self directed, always on task, has all necessary materials, all deadlines met. 20 19 18 17 16	Usually on task, has necessary materials, all deadlines met. 15 14 13 12 11	Frequently not on task, often missing materials, one deadline not met. 10 9 8 7 6	Wastes time in class, does not bring necessary materials, some deadlines not met. 5 4 3 2 1
Content / Research / Organization/ EMAIL & Report:	Exceeds minimum requirements of task, material accurate and current, all significant information given, variety, clear & logical presentation. 20 19 18 17 16	Meets the majority of task requirements, material accurate and current, most significant information given, some variety, generally logical presentation. 15 14 13 12 11	Meets some of the task requirements, errors in accuracy, significant data missing, lack of variety, haphazard organization. 10 9 8 7 6	Does not fulfill the minimum requirements, inadequate quality of materials, insufficient data, monotonous, no coherent organization. 5 4 3 2 1
Presentation / Delivery:	Knows appropriate material well, shows self-confidence, is attentive to audience, is convincing. 20 19 18 17 16	Knows appropriate material while referring to notes, shows some self-confidence, is generally attentive to audience, presents valid arguments/information. 15 14 13 12 11	Relies heavily on notes, lack of self-confidence / unprepared, not aware of audience comprehension or lack thereof, presents unconvincing arguments/information. 10 9 8 7 6	Inadequate knowledge of information, serious lack of self-confidence because of lack of preparation, ignores audience, does not stimulate interest. 5 4 3 2 1
Presentation Visuals:	All visuals accurate and attractive, appropriate selection to highlight presentation. 20 19 18 17 16	Most visuals accurate and attractive, appropriate selection to highlight presentation. 15 14 13 12 11	Visuals have flaws in accuracy, lack appeal, are not carefully prepared, inappropriate selection to highlight presentation. 10 9 8 7 6	Visuals are inaccurate, lack appeal, are sloppy indicating lack of preparation, inappropriate selection to highlight presentation 5 4 3 2 1
Language Accuracy/ EMAIL & Report:	Uses well formed sentences, excellent vocabulary choices, no grammatical errors. 20 19 18 17 16	Generally well formed sentences, good vocabulary variety, few grammatical errors. 15 14 13 12 11	Numerous weak sentences, limited vocabulary variety, many grammatical errors. 10 9 8 7 6	Generally weak sentences, poor vocabulary, many grammatical errors. 5 4 3 2 1

- LeLoup, J. W., & Ponterio, R. (1997). Meeting the national Standards: Now what do I do?. In A. Vogely (Ed.). Celebrating Languages: Opening All Minds! (pp. 43-50). NYSAFLT Annual Meeting Series 14.